

# *The Life of Tulasi Devi*

## Chapter One

### THE APPEARANCE OF TULASI DEVI

Narada Muni asked Lord Narayana, "O Bhagavan! How did the pure, chaste Tulasi Devi become Your wife? Where was she born? Who was she in her previous birth? What family did she come from? And what austerities did she perform to get You as her husband--You, who are above the material energy, not subject to change, the Cosmic Self, the Supreme God, the Lord of all, omniscient, the cause of all, omnipresent, container and preserver of all. And how did Tulasi Devi, Your chief goddess, become a tree? O You who resolve all doubts, my mind is curious to know all about these points; therefore, it compels me to ask you these questions. Kindly remove these doubts from my mind."

Lord Narayana then related the following account...

Manu Daksa Savarni was a partial expansion of Lord Visnu. He was extremely virtuous, devoted to the Lord, and very famous for his good deeds. Daksa Savarni's son, Dharma Savarni, was also extremely virtuous. Dharma Savarni's pious son was called Visnu Savarni, and his son, who was a great Vaisnava, was known as Raja Savarni.

However, Raja Savarni's son, Vrisadhvaja, was fanatically devoted to Lord Siva. Lord Siva lived in Vrisadhvaja's house for three celestial yugas (ages) and loved him more than his own sons. Vrisadhvaja did not revere Lord Narayana, Goddess Laksmi or any of the demigods. He abolished the worship of Laksmi in the month of Bhadra (Aug., Sept.) and the worship of Saraswati in the month of Magha (Jan., Feb.). He did not participate in the sacrifice and worship performed out of respect for Lord Visnu (Narayana) and criticized them rather severely.

The demigods did not curse him because they feared Lord Siva. However, Surya, the sun god, no longer able to restrain his wrath, cursed him: "O King, just as you are completely devoted to Lord Siva and only to Lord Siva, and just as you do not recognize any of the other demigods, I declare that you will now lose your wealth and prosperity!"

When Lord Siva heard this curse, he became angry. Seizing his trident, he ran after Lord Surya. Afraid, the sun god

went with his father, Kasyapa Muni, to Brahmaloka, the highest material planet, to take shelter of Lord Brahma. But Lord Siva pursued him there. Lord Brahma, also afraid of Lord Siva, took Lord Surya and Kasyapa Muni to the region of Vaikuntha, the spiritual or eternal world. There, with throats parched due to anxiety, they took refuge of Lord Narayana, the Lord of all. They offered obeisances to Him and praised Him repeatedly and finally explained why they were so apprehensive.

Lord Narayana bestowed His mercy on them and granted them the power to be fearless. He said, "O fearful ones, be consoled. How can you be afraid of anyone while I am here? If anyone remembers Me when he is in danger, wherever he may be, I hurry to him with my Sudarsan disc in my hand and save him. O demigods! I am always the creator, preserver and destroyer of this universe. In the form of Visnu, I am the preserver; in the form of Brahma, the creator; and in the form of Siva, the destroyer. I am Siva, I am you, and I am Surya. I assume numerous forms and preserve the universe. So go back to your respective places. You have nothing to be afraid of. All will be well.

"From this day on, you have nothing to fear from Lord Siva. He is the shelter of the pious, is easily pleased, is the servant and lord of his devotees, and is great minded. Lord Siva and the Sudarsana cakra are dearer to Me than My life. In the world of

valor, they excel all. Lord Siva can easily create ten million Suryas and ten million Brahmas. For him, nothing is impossible. He is not conscious of the external world. Meditating on Me, his heart centered,

he is absorbed day and night. From his five faces he repeats My mantra with devotion, and he always sings My glories. Day and night, I also always think of his welfare. To whatever degree one worships Me, to that degree I favor one. The nature of Siva is all-auspiciousness."

While Lord Narayana was speaking, Lord Siva arrived. His eyes red, and he was sitting on his bull carrier holding his trident. He dismounted quickly and humbly offered obeisances with devotion to the Lord of Laksmi, the tranquil Supreme Being.

Lord Narayana, Visnu, was sitting on His jewel-studded throne. He was decorated with a crown, earrings, and a garland, and was holding His disc. His form was extremely beautiful, and His complexion like a fresh blue rain cloud. Each of His attendants had four arms and was fanning Him with four hands. His body was anointed with sandal paste and He was wearing a yellow garment. Lord Visnu, who shows kindness to His devotees, was chewing betel nut that had been offered to Him by His wife Laksmi. Smiling, He was watching and listening to the dancing and singing of the Vidyadharis.

After Lord Siva bowed down to Lord Narayana, he bowed to Lord Brahma. Lord Surya and Kasyapa Muni respectfully saluted Lord Siva. Then Lord Siva worshiped Lord Visnu, the Lord of all, and seated himself on a throne. The attendants of Lord Narayana began to fan Lord Siva with white whisks to relieve him of the fatigue of his journey. Lord Siva, because of being in contact with Lord Visnu's virtues, then assumed a cheerful disposition and adored the Eternal Being with his five mouths.

Lord Narayana was highly gratified. With sweet, nectarean words, He said, "O Lord Siva, you are the symbol of all good and welfare. Thus, to ask about your welfare would be foolish. I would ask you only out of respect for the rules of society and the method prescribed in the Vedas. One who yields fruits of devotion and gives all prosperity should not be asked about his austerities or material prosperity. Since you preside over knowledge, it would be useless to ask if you are increasing in knowledge. It would be equally useless to ask a conqueror of death if he is free from all danger. But you have come to my residence for a reason. What is it? Have you become angry over something?"

"O Lord Visnu!," Lord Siva began. "King Vrisadhvasa is my great devotee. Lord Surya has cursed him and that has made me angry. Out of affection for my son, the king, I was about to kill Surya. But Surya sought shelter of Lord Brahma, and now both of them have sought Your protection. Those who are distressed and take shelter of You, either by speaking about You or by remembering You, become completely safe and free from danger. They overcome death and old age. What to speak of those who come personally to You and take shelter. When one remembers You, his dangers disappear. All good comes to him. O Lord of the world! What will become of my foolish devotee who, by the curse of Lord Surya, has lost his fortune and prosperity?"

Lord Visnu replied, "O Lord Siva! A half hour has elapsed here in Vaikuntha. In that time, twenty-one celestial yugas have passed away. Therefore, King Vrisadhvasa, through the revolution of irresistible and dreadful time, is dead. His son, Hamsadhvasa, in the course of time, also died. Hamsadhvasa begot two noble sons named Dharmadhvasa and Kusadhvasa. They are both great Vaisnavas but, because of Lord Surya's curse, they have become luckless. They lost their kingdoms, including all property and prosperity. But they are now engaged in worshiping Goddess Laksmi, who is pleased with their efforts. Therefore, She has agreed to descend to Earth and expand Herself partially by taking birth from the wives of those two kings. Then, by the favor of Goddess Laksmi, Dharmadhvasa and Kusadhvasa will become prosperous, mighty kings. O Lord Siva! Your devotee Vrisadhvasa is dead, so return to your abode. O Lord Brahma, Lord Surya and Kasyapa Muni--you also should return your realms."

Bhagavan Visnu then went with His wife to the inner apartments. The demigods went cheerfully to their own abodes, Lord Siva continuing his practice of austerity.

Dharmadhvasa and Kusadhvasa performed harsh asceticism and worshiped Goddess Laksmi. Thereafter, they separately obtained the blessings they desired. By Goddess Laksmi's favor, they again became the rulers of the earth. They acquired great spiritual merits, were married, and begot children. King Dharmadhvasa was married to Madhavi. After some time, she became pregnant with a partial incarnation of Goddess Laksmi. However, the infant remained in Madhavi's womb for one hundred celestial years. Day by day Madhavi's luster increased. Then, on an auspicious day and moment, when there was a full moon, in the month of Kartika, on a Friday, she gave birth.

The grace of the Goddess of Fortune, Laksmi, manifested through the baby. There were marks of the lotus flower on the infant's feet. Her face looked like the autumnal moon, her eyes resembled blooming lotuses, and her lips appeared like ripe bimba fruit. Her palms and the soles of her feet were reddish, her navel was deep, and just above it were three folds. Her buttocks were round, and her body was delightfully warm in the winter and cool in the summer--very pleasant to touch. Her breast was firm and

her waist thin, and the light shining from her body surrounded her like a halo. Her complexion was white, like a Champaka flower, and her hair looked beautiful. Because her beauty was incomparable, the sages called her Tulasi.

## Chapter Two

### TULASI PERFORMS AUSTERITIES

As soon as she was born, Tulasi resolved to go to the mountainous region of Badarinatha to practice severe austerities. Though many persons tried to dissuade her, no one was able to; for she was determined to stay and pray in the forest till Lord Krsna appeared and agreed to become her husband. During a period of one hundred thousand celestial years, she endured the following:

In the summer, she exposed herself to four fires around her and the sun above; in the winter, she submerged herself in the icy waters; and in the rainy season, she subjected herself to heavy downpours at the funeral grounds. For 20,000 years, she subsisted on fruits and water; for 30,000 years, she chewed dry leaves; for 40,000 years she lived only on air; and for 10,000 years she ate nothing and just stood on one leg.

Finally, she saw Lord Brahma in the sky, riding on his swan carrier and sweeping down towards her. Believing that he had come to grant her a boon, she bowed down low to him.

Lord Brahma said, "O Tulasi, ask me for a boon. Whether it be devotion to Lord Hari or servitorship to Him or freedom from old age or freedom from death--I will grant it."

"Yes, O Lord, I will ask. Please listen. I will not hide my desires out of fear or shame, since you are all-knowing. My name is Tulasi. Formally I was a cowherd girl in Goloka, and there I served Radharani, the beloved of Sri Krsna. I am a partial expansion of Radharani and was her favorite companion. But one day in the place where the rasa dance had occurred, Krsna became intimate with me and I fainted from excessive joy. While I was lying there, Radharani suddenly appeared and saw me in that condition. She was not at all pleased. Blinded with fury, she first reproached Krsna and then cursed me. She said, 'O vile one! Go! And take birth as a human being!'

"Then Krsna said to me, 'When you take birth in India, if you practice austerities, Lord Brahma will grant you a blessing. He will arrange for you to marry the four-armed Narayana, who is an expansion of Myself.' Then Krsna disappeared. And out of fear of Radharani, I left Goloka and was born in this world...So please grant me that boon. I want to have that handsome and peaceful Narayana as my husband."

Lord Brahma replied, "O Tulasi, Sudama was a partial expansion of Krsna and was one of Krsna's cowherd boyfriends in Goloka. As a result of a curse by Radharani, he is presently living on earth among the Danavas (demons). His name is Sankhacuda. He is very energetic and no one can compare with him in strength. While living in Goloka, he was very attracted to you and wanted to marry you. But because he feared Radharani, he did not make any overtures.

"Just as you are a jatismara--that is, one who knows her previous births--Sankhacuda also is. Remembering his past desire to be close to you, he has performed severe austerities to obtain you as his wife. I now wish to grant his desire. Therefore, O beautiful one, please agree to wed him. However, later on, by the special arrangement of Providence, you will get the beautiful Narayana as your husband. But after that, He will curse you and you will be transformed into the world-purifying Tulasi plant (holy basil). You will be the best of flowers and dearer to Narayana than His own life. No one's worship will be complete without your leaves. You will remain as a tree in Vrndavana and will be widely known as Vrndavani. The cowherd men and women will worship Lord Hari with your leaves. As the presiding deity of the Tulasi plant, you will always enjoy the company of Krsna, the best of cowherd boys."

Tulasi Devi smiled and gladly said to Lord Brahma, "O Father, I will be honest with you. I am not as devoted to the four-armed Narayana as I am to the two-armed Krsna. For in Goloka, my close encounter with Krsna was suddenly interrupted, leaving me still longing for Him. Thus, it was only because Krsna had asked me that I have been praying to get Narayana for my husband. But now it appears certain that by your grace I will again get Krsna, who is very difficult to attain. However, O lord, please grant me the following boon: that I lose my fear of Radharani."

Lord Brahma replied, "O child, I shall now give you the sixteen-lettered Radha mantra. By this boon you will be as dear to Radharani as Her life, and She will approve of Your intimate dealings with Krsna."

Lord Brahma initiated Tulasi Devi into to the sixteen-lettered mantra, the hymn, and the mode of worship of Sri Radha. Then, blessing her, he disappeared.

As directed, Tulasi engaged herself in worshipping Srimati Radharani and, after twelve years, attained success. Obtaining the desired boon, she reaped the fruits that were unattainable by others. As the pangs of her austerities ended, she became cheerful. When one gets the fruits of one's labor and then considers the difficulties experienced in attaining them, the difficulties then seem pleasurable.

Tulasi was in the prime of her youth and she longed for the company of Sri Krsna. Finishing her food and drink, she lay down on a beautiful bed decorated with flowers and perfumed with sandal paste. She went to sleep with a happy heart. But while she slept, Kamadeva, the god of love, shot five arrows at her--arrows that were meant to enchant her. Consequently, though she was anointed with cooling sandal paste and slept on a bed strewn with flowers, her body began to feel as though it were on fire. Out of joy, the hairs on her body stood on end, her eyes reddened and her body began to tremble. One moment she looked thin and at another moment she grew restless or drowsy. Sometimes she became agitated or warm with desire, at other times she fainted, then recovered, then sorrowed. Sometimes she got up from the bed, walked this way and that way, sat down or lay down.

This abnormal condition of her body and mind increased daily; so much so that her soft bed felt like a bed of thorns; delicious fruits and water tasted like poison; her house seemed like a desert; her soft delicate cloth felt hot like fire; and the vermilion mark on her forehead pained like a boil.

In her dreams she saw a nicely dressed, smiling, jolly youth. He was adorned with jewels, besmeared with sandal paste and garlanded with flowers. Gazing at her face, he spoke to her affectionately, and embraced and kissed her repeatedly. One moment he went away; the next moment he returned; then she cried out, "O Lord of my heart, where are you going? Please don't go!" When she awakened, she wept again and again. In this way Tulasi Devi passed her days at Badarikasrama.

## Chapter Three

### THE BIRTH OF SANKHACHUDA

The sage Kasyapa was the son of the prajapati (forefather) Marici and the grandson of Lord Brahma, and was very learned. Daksa, another prajapati, gave him thirteen of his daughters in marriage. One of Kasyapa Muni's wives was known as Danu. She was very attractive and chaste, and Kasyapa cared for her with love and devotion. Danu bore many mighty sons, one of whom was Vipracitti, who was exceedingly powerful and courageous. His son Dambha was self-controlled and a great devotee of Lord Visnu. But he could not beget a son, so he became anxious. Therefore, to improve the situation, he went to Puskara Forest and performed severe austerity for a hundred thousand years. There, sitting in a steady posture and uttering the Krsna mantra, he practiced japa.

While practicing, an intolerable effulgence shot out from Dambha's head and spread everywhere. It was so hot that all the demigods, sages and Manus were scorched by it. Thus, with Indra leading, they all sought shelter of Lord Brahma.

Arriving at Lord Brahma's abode, they praised him and then informed him of the situation. After hearing about it, Lord Brahma, to relate the problem to Lord Visnu, led them to Vaikuntha. There, with palms joined reverentially, they praised the great savior and Lord of the three worlds. The demigods then asked, "O Lord, we do not know what has caused this. Please tell us. What is that light by which we have been scorched?"

Lord Visnu laughed and lovingly said, "O demigods, do not be afraid; remain calm and unshaken. No flood will occur and it is not the time of universal dissolution. The asura Dambha, one of my devotees, is performing asceticism to obtain a son. I shall soon bless him and that will quiet him."

Encouraged by this, Lord Brahma and the other demigods returned to their own realms.

Lord Visnu then went to Puskara where Dambha was practicing austerity. Seeing that Dambha was repeating His name, the Lord consoled him and asked, "What blessing do you want Me to grant you?"

Dambha offered his obeisances with great devotion and praised the Lord repeatedly. Then he said, "O Lord of lords, O lotus-eyed one, obeisances unto You. O Lord of Laksmi, O Lord of the three worlds, please be merciful to me. Please give me a powerful and courageous son who will be Your devotee, be invincible to the demigods, and be the conqueror of the three worlds."

Lord Visnu asked Dambha to stop his austerity, granted him the blessing, and disappeared. As the Lord vanished, Dambha offered obeisance in that direction and returned home. Within a short while his blessed wife became pregnant. She radiated an effulgence that illuminated the inner apartment of her

residence. The soul residing in her womb was Sudama, one of Lord Kṛṣṇa's leading cowherd companions who had been cursed by Srimatī Rādhārāṇī.

When Dambha's chaste wife gave birth to a radiant-looking son, Dambha invited the sages to his place and had the post-natal rites performed. There was great jubilation and, on a favorable day, the father named him Sankhacuda.

The son grew up in his father's residence like the moon in its bright half. In his childhood he learned all the traditions, customs, injunctions and prohibitions, and became resplendent. Engaging in childhood play, he delighted his parents and became the favorite of all the family members.

Later on, to obtain a boon from Lord Brahma, Sankhacuda performed an austerity in Puskara for a long while. He concentrated his mind, restrained his senses and organs of action, and chanted a mantra that his preceptor, Jaigisavya, had imparted to him. Finally, Lord Brahma went to Sankhacuda to grant him a blessing. Lord Brahma asked, "Tell me what boon you want."

Seeing Lord Brahma, the Danava king bowed to him humbly and praised him with devotional words. Then he said, "Please make me invincible to the demigods, and also enable me to marry Tulasi.

"So be it," Brahma replied. Then he gave Sankhacuda the Divine amulet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This amulet, called Sarvamangalamaya (Conqueror of the World), was considered the most auspicious of all auspicious things in the world, for it guaranteed victory everywhere.

Brahma continued, "Now you should go to Badarikasrama. Tulasi Devī is performing penance there by her own will. You should marry her there. She is the daughter of King Dharmadhvajā." Lord Brahma then disappeared.

Sankhacuda, whose austerity had now borne fruit at Puskara, tied that most precious amulet round his neck. He then set out for Badarikasrama, his face beaming with joy.

## Chapter four

### TULASI DEVI TESTS KING SANKHACHUDA

Tulasi saw Sankhacuda approaching in his jeweled airplane and noticed that he was in the prime of his youth. He was handsome like Cupid, white-complexioned like the Champaka flower and decorated with gems. His face resembled the full moon of autumn, his eyes looked like lotuses in full bloom, and his

cheeks flashed with the glow of his earrings. A Parijata flower garlanded his neck, musk and saffron anointed his body, and sandal paste perfumed his person.

As he came closer, Tulasi hid her face in her shawl and smiled at him with sidelong glances. Blushing at the thought of this first meeting, she bowed her head nervously and eagerly drank in with her eyes the lotus of his face.

Sankhacuda also gazed at Tulasi, seated as she was on a lovely bed strewn with flowers and sandalwood. Her teeth shown like pearls, her lips were like Bimba fruit, her nose was graceful and her complexion golden. She resembled the autumnal moon. Adding to her grace, just below the parting of her hair, was the mark of sandal paste and musk; and, just below them, a mark of vermilion. She had a low yet deep navel, and below it, three lovely abdominal folds. Her palms were reddish, her fingernails were glowing, and her feet were radiant and crimson, colored with lac-dye. Her glowing toenails surpassed the glow of the autumn moon, giving her an unrivaled beauty.

Tulasi was adorned with lovely jingling ornaments, and the knot of hair at the back of her head was decorated with a jasmine wreath. Shark-shaped earrings adorned her cheeks while a diamond necklace beautified her breast. She wore gorgeous bangles of conch on her arms and wrists, as well as precious jewels on her fingers.

Sankhacuda sat down and said to her, "O beautiful girl, whose daughter are you? And how have you come to this forest? You look most fortunate and blessed. Indeed, you are the personification of heavenly joy--the best of women! You are a model of loveliness and can certainly bewilder even the saints!"

When Tulasi gave no reply, he asked, "O gracious one, why don't you speak? I am your servant, so please greet me with the melody of your speech."

Her head lowered, her face smiling, the beautiful-eyed Tulasi said, "I am the daughter of King Dharmadhvaja and have been practicing asceticism here. But who are you? And why are you talking to me? If a noble man sees a virtuous woman alone, he does not talk to her. So go away--wherever you please."

But Sankhacuda did not move.

Tulasi continued. "The sastras say that only a degraded man desires a woman. At first a woman is sweet to a man, but later proves fatal. Though her mouth rains honey, her heart is like a jar of poison. She uses sweet words but her heart is sharp like a razor. To achieve her own selfish ends she is submissive to her husband; otherwise, she is unsubmissive. While her face looks cheerful, her heart is dirty. Even the Vedas and the Puranas

cannot fathom her character. A wise man never trusts a base woman. She has no friend or enemy; for all she wants are new lovers. When a woman sees a well-dressed man, she inwardly desires him, but outwardly she appears chaste and modest. She is naturally passionate, attracts men's minds, and eagerly engages in sex. Though outwardly she hides her lust and appears modest, when she meets her lover in secret, she is ready to swallow him up. When she does not have sex with him, she feels offended, her body burns with anger, and she begins to quarrel. When her passions are fully satisfied, she becomes cheerful; when unsatisfied, morose.

"A woman likes a good lover more than sweet foods or refreshing drinks; she likes him even more than her own son; he is dearer to her than her life. But if the lover becomes impotent or aged, she regards him as an enemy. Quarrels and anger ensue. Then she devours him as a snake eats a rat. She is rashness personified and a mine of vices. A woman is hypocritical, obstinate and unfaithful. Even Lord Brahma and other gods are deluded by her. She is a hindrance on the path of austerity, an obstacle to liberation, an impediment to developing faith in Lord Hari, a refuge of all delusion and a living chain that binds men to the world. She is like a magician and is as false as dreams. She appears to be very beautiful, but is she is a bucket of stool, urine, gas and blood. When God created her, he arranged that she should become the spirit of delusion to the deluded and poison to those who desire liberation. Thus, on no account should a woman be desired, and by all means she should be avoided."

Sankhacuda smiled and then answered, "O goddess, what you have said is not completely false. It is partly true and partly false. From the Creator have come chaste and unchaste women. One is praiseworthy, the other isn't. Examples of chaste women are Laksmi, Sarasvati, Durga, Savitri and Radha. Women who are expansions of them are auspicious, glorious and very commendable, such as Satarupa, Devahuti, Svadha, Savaha, Daksina, Anasuya, Ganga, Diti, Aditi, Vedavati, etc. In every yuga cycle these women are excellent. The heavenly prostitutes are also expansions and partial expansions of the above women, but they are not praiseworthy because they are unchaste.



Women who are in the mode of goodness are virtuous and pure. The sages declare them to be excellent. But those who are in the modes of passion and ignorance are not so praiseworthy. The passionate ones are fond of sense pleasures, indulge in them, and always want to fulfill their selfish goals. Such women are usually insincere, deluded and irreligious. Generally, they are unchaste. But woman in the mode of ignorance are considered the worst. They are irresistible.

"A virtuous man would never court another man's wife in either public or private. But I have come to you by Lord Brahma's command--to marry you according to the Gandharva rite. (In this, the bride and bridegroom meet each other of their own accord and consummate their meeting in sexual union. No sacred rituals are necessary.

"My name is Sankhacuda. When the demigods see me, they flee in fear. In my previous birth, I lived in Goloka and was a cowherd boy named Sudama. I was a close friend of Sri Krsna's, one of His attendants. I was one of the eight celebrated cowherds. Then Srimati Radharani cursed me to be born in India in a demon family. By Krsna's grace and by His mantra, I am a jatismara, that is, I know the history of my previous birth. You also are a jatismara. So you know that in your previous birth, in Goloka, when Radharani caught you alone with Krsna, she became angry and cursed you to be born here, in India. In Goloka I very much wanted to consort with you; but because I feared Radharani, I did not do so."

Sankhacuda stopped talking. Then Tulasi smiled and cheerfully said, "Persons like you are famous in this world and good women desire such husbands. You have defeated me in argument. A man who is conquered by a woman is very impure and condemned by people in general. The forefathers and the demigods regard men who are conquered by women as low and contemptible. Even their fathers and mothers mentally despise them. The Vedas say that when a child is born or a relative dies, the brahmanas are purified in ten days; the ksatriyas in twelve days; the vaisyas in fifteen days; and the sudras as well as other low classes in twenty-one days. But a man conquered by a woman always remains impure. Only when his body is burned to ashes does he become purified. Neither the ancestors nor the demigods accept from him offerings of cakes, flowers, etc. Men whose hearts are totally conquered by women acquire no fruits from their knowledge, austerities, japa, fire sacrifices, worship, learning or fame.

"I tested you to determine how strong you are in knowledge. One should choose one's husband by examining a man's merits and defects. If one gives his daughter in marriage to a man devoid of all good qualifications, to an old man, to a man who is ignorant or poor, illiterate, diseased, ugly, wrathful, harsh, lame, limbless, deaf, dumb, inactive, or impotent--this sin is equivalent to the sin of murdering a brahmana. But if one gives his daughter in marriage to a young Vaisnava who is learned, well-qualified and peaceful, one acquires the fruits of performing ten horse sacrifices. If one raises a daughter and then sells her out of greed for profit, he falls to the hell known as Kumbhipaka. There, for a period equal to fourteen of Lord Indra's lifespans, such a sinner has to drink his daughter's urine and eat her stool as well as be bitten by worms and crows. When this period ends, he has to be born in this world as a diseased person and earn his livelihood by selling and carrying meat."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TULASI MARRIES SANKHACHUDA

When Tulasi Devi stopped speaking, Lord Brahma suddenly appeared there. After Sankhacuda and Tulasi offered him their respects, Lord Brahma said, "O Sankhacuda! Why are you wasting your time in such empty talks with Tulasi? Marry her now by the Gandharva rites. As you are a gem among males, she is a gem among females. When a clever couple marry, the union is very happy. And who would abandon happiness when it is at hand? Anyone who would do so is worse than a beast. And you, Tulasi! Why are you testing this noble and qualified person who can subdue both the gods and the demons? Marry Sankhacuda, just as Laksmi is married to Narayana, Radhika to Krsna, my Savitri to me, Saci to Indra and Aditi to Kasyapa. Stay with the handsome Sankhacuda for a long time and, as you like, wander with him to various places. When Sankhacuda leaves his body, you will return to Goloka and get Krsna as your husband." Lord Brahma then blessed them and returned to his own abode.

Sankhacuda then married Tulasi by the Gandharva rite. Glorifying the marriage, the demigods sounded their drums and showered flowers on them from the sky.

Sometimes the newly married couple would go to a flower grove and at other times to a river bank. There they would sleep on flower beds smeared with sandal paste and enjoy marital pleasures. Tulasi easily stole the heart of her husband, and Sankhacuda also attracted Tulasi's heart. After Tulasi garlanded her husband with parijata flowers, which prevent disease and old age, she placed a precious jeweled ring on his finger and offered him rare beautiful gems. Bowing down to his feet with devotion, she repeatedly said, "I am at your service!"

Sankhacuda smiled. He then presented Tulasi with clothes he had obtained from Lord Varuna's house; he also gave her a precious necklace of jewels, an armlet he had gotten from Swaha (Agni's wife), armlets from Chhaya (the sun god's wife), earrings from Rohini (the moon god's wife), finger rings from Rati (Cupid's wife), conch ornaments from Visvakarma, as well as excellent bedding adorned with pearls and jewels. After further adorning her, he placed her feet on his chest and said, "I am your servant."

They left the hermitage and began to travel to various places. They went to different mountains, flower gardens, caves, beaches, riversides and forests. Wherever they went, they enjoyed each other's company with great satisfaction, never tiring of one another. Sankhacuda then brought Tulasi to his own kingdom and there they continued to delight in each other's company.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LORD VISNU HELPS THE DEMIGODS

Sankhacuda enjoyed his kingdom for one Manvantara (4,320,000 years) and, during that period, gained control over all the Devas, Dhanavas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Raksasas. He dispossessed the gods of their realms and privileges, deprived them of their rights with respect to worship and offerings, and seized their weapons and ornaments. Consequently, they wandered about the universe like helpless beggars. Finally, they united in a group and went to Lord Brahma's assembly. Sobbing, they related the whole story of how Sankhacuda had oppressed them. Lord Brahma took them to Lord Siva's realm and related to Siva the details of the case.

Lord Siva then took them all to the highest place, Vaikuntha, where there is neither old age nor death. As they approached the first gate, they saw the watchmen guarding the gate and sitting on jeweled seats. The watchmen had beautiful dark blue bodies and looked effulgent. They had smiles on their faces, lotuslike eyes, and four arms--each hand holding a conch, mace, disc and lotus. They wore yellow garments, were decorated with jeweled ornaments, and were garlanded with forest flowers.

Lord Brahma asked them for admittance and they nodded their approval. Then, after passing through sixteen gates, the group finally arrived before Lord Narayana. The assembly hall was filled with saints and four-armed attendants who resembled Narayana and were wearing Kaustubha jewels. The assembly hall was so brilliant with rays of light that it appeared as though the moon had just arisen. By Lord Narayana's mercy, there were diamonds, gems and necklaces of jewels placed in various areas. In some spots there were rows of pearls that shed their splendor and brilliance, and in other spots there were

mirrors arranged in a circle. In certain areas there were jewels called Padmaragas which were artistically arranged to appear like lotuses spreading their radiant beauty everywhere. There were rows of steps made of Syamantaka jewels. Throughout the hall were wonderful pillars built of Indranilam jewels. There were sandal leaves strung high from pillar to pillar. There were also golden jars full of water. All around were parijata-flower garlands, sweet-scented sandal trees, and saffron and musk; the whole atmosphere was permeated with sweet fragrances.

The Vidyadaras were dancing in one area. The assembly hall measured eight thousand miles in circumference. All over, numerous servants were engaged in various services. Lord Brahma, Lord Siva and other demigods saw Lord Hari (Narayana) sitting in the center on a precious jeweled throne; He looked like the moon surrounded by many stars. He was wearing a crown on His head, earrings, a wildflower garland round His neck and sandal paste on His body. Holding a lotus in His hand, He was smiling, watching the dancers and listening to the music. He looked very tranquil. Laksmi was gently holding His feet and He was chewing the sweet-scented betel she had given Him. Ganga was fanning Him devotedly with a white chamara, and others were singing hymns to Him with their heads lowered in devotion.

Lord Brahma and the other gods offered their obeisances to Lord Visnu. As they did, their hairs stood on end, tears flowed from their eyes and their voices were choked with emotion. Then Lord Brahma, his hands clasped and his head bowed, informed the Lord about Sankhacuda's doings.

Lord Hari smiled and said, "O lotus born! I know all about Sankhacuda. In his previous birth he was my great devotee, a very energetic cowherd boy in Goloka. I will tell you something about him which is quite sanctifying. His name was Sudama and he was my chief attendant. He is now a Danava because in Goloka Radha pronounced a terrible curse on him. Here is how it happened...

"One day I left Radha's company and went to the rasa dance area with the gopi named Viraja. Radha soon heard from one of Her maidservants that I had flirted with Viraja. Blinded with fury, She hastened there with Her attendants to see if this were true. Seeing that it was, Radha immediately converted Viraja into a river. I myself disappeared, so Radha rushed home angrily with Her attendants.

"Later, when I was with Sudama and She saw me, Radha rebuked me very much. However, I remained silent. But Sudama could not tolerate this, so he rebuked Radha in My very presence. This was quite intolerable to Her dignity. Her eyes became red with anger and She immediately ordered thousands of Her attendants to drive him away. Sudama then trembled with fear. As Radha's attendants tried to drive him away, he resisted and repeated his reproaches against Her. When She heard them, She cursed him, saying, 'May you be born in the womb of a Danavi (demon woman)!' "

"Sudama bowed down to Me and, crying, began to leave. But Radha, who is quite merciful, began to melt. Weeping, she tried repeatedly to stop him from leaving. "Wait!" She called. "Wait! Where are you going? You don't have to go. Please come back." She became distressed, and Her attendants and the cowherd boys began to weep. I then explained to them, 'In about a half a moment Sudama will return, having fulfilled the conditions of the curse. Of course a half moment here is equal to about one Manvantara (4,320,000 years) on Earth.' I then called to Sudama. 'O Sudama, when the curse expires, please come back here!'

"O demigods, that expert mystic and devotee Sankhacuda will return to Goloka. Therefore, O gods, take My trident and go quickly to India. Lord Siva will kill the Danava with the trident. The demon is wearing My auspicious amulet around his neck. It is called the "Conqueror of the World." As long as he keeps wearing it, no one can kill him. So I will go to him disguised as a Brahman and beg the amulet from him. But you have granted him the boon that he cannot die unless his wife's chastity is violated. I will take care of this as well. Then he will surely die. Later, when his wife leaves her body, she will become my dearest wife." Narayana then gave Lord Siva his trident.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### AN ENVOY SENT TO SANKHACHUDA

Lord Brahma and the other demigods returned to their respective abodes. Later, to gain victory for the demigods, Lord Siva pitched his big tent and camped on the banks of the Chandrabhaga River under a beautiful fig tree. He then sent Puspadanta, the leader of the Gandharvas, as a messenger to Sankhacuda. When Puspadanta arrived at Sankhacuda capital, he noticed that it was more beautiful than Indra's realm and more opulent than Kuvera's.

The city was 40 miles wide and 80 miles long. It was built of pearl and jewel crystals, and on all sides there were roadways. Seven inaccessible moats, one after another, surrounded the city.

There were hundreds of shops full of trade articles and marketable commodities. Palatial buildings of traders and merchants were all over. Thousands and thousands of beautiful buildings, constructed with scarlet gems, inlaid with various ornaments and decorated with fancy articles, gave the place a boundless charm.

The Gandharva chief saw that Sankhacuda's palace was spherical like the moon. Four successive moats with fiery flames encircled it. On top of the palace were ramparts, made of jewels, that touched the sky. The palace was inaccessible to enemies but offered no hindrance to friends.

The twelve gates, decorated with lotuses, jeweled mirrors, paintings and statues, were guarded by twelve gatekeepers. On all sides the place was protected by very powerful, graceful, well-dressed and richly adorned demons who were holding heavenly weapons in their hands. When Puspadanta approached the first gate, he saw that it was guarded by a man who had a hideous face, copper complexion and tawny eyes, and who was smiling and holding a trident in his hand. Puspadanta explained to him the purpose of his mission--that he was a war ambassador--and the guard allowed him to pass inside; the other gatekeepers did the same. At the last gate he said to the guard, "O guard, quickly inform your king that a war is about to occur."

The guard did so and, obtaining Sankhacuda's permission, ushered the messenger inside. There, the Gandharva saw the well-formed, handsome demon seated in the center of the royal assembly on a golden throne. One attendant was holding a jeweled umbrella over the king's head while other attendants were fanning him with white chamaras (whisks). Countless demons surrounded him and armed guards walked here and there. Sankhacuda was beautifully dressed in heavenly garments, covered with garlands, and anointed with fragrance.

Seeing all this, Puspadanta was thunderstruck and said to Sankhacuda, "O King, I am a messenger of Lord Siva and my name is Puspadanta. My lord has ordered me to tell you the following: The demigods have sought the protection of Lord Hari. So you had better restore to them their kingdoms and rights. Lord Hari has given His own trident to Lord Siva and asked him to wage war against you if necessary. Presently, Lord Siva is residing under the shade of a fig tree on the bank of the Puspabhadra River. Either you must return to the demigods their property or you must be ready to fight with Lord Siva...What shall I tell my lord is your reply?"

The demon laughed loudly and said, "You had better leave. I shall go to him in the morning."

The messenger returned to Lord Siva and conveyed the demon's message. In the meantime the following group of persons appeared before Lord Siva: Kartika, Nandi, Mahakala, Bana, Manibhadra, the eight Bhairavas, the eleven Rudras, the eight Vasus, the twelve Adityas, Indra, Agni, Chandra, Viswakarma, the two Aswini-kumaras, Kuvera, Yama, Jayanta, Nala-Kuvara, Vayu, Varuna, Budha, Mangala, Dharma, Sani, Kama, Ugra-chanda, Kottari, the hundred-armed Bhadrakali, as well as many other personages.

Bhadrakali was seated on an excellent chariot. Her paraphernalia, clothing, garland and sandal paste were red. Inspiring her devotees with courage and infusing fear into the enemy, she began dancing, laughing and singing. Her rolling tongue and the skull she held in her hand were each eight miles in circumference. She carried a trident, an iron spear, conches, a wheel, mace, lotus, bow, arrows, dumbbells, a scimitar, thunder, the weapons of Visnu and Varuna, a snake noose, the weapons of Agni, Narayana, Brahma, Gandharva, Garuda, Pasupata, a pestle, shield, staff, as well as other irresistible weapons. This fearsome goddess was accompanied by millions of devotee Yoginis and Dakinis, and also countless ghosts, goblins and demons known as Bhutas, Pretas, Pisachas, Kusmandas, Brahma Raksasas and Raksasas, as well as Yaksas and Kinnaras. Then Kartikkeya arrived and he bowed down to his father Lord Siva, who asked him to sit on his left side and help him. The army remained there in battle array.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### SANKHACHUDA CONSOLES TULASI

At the palace, the mighty Sankhacuda went to the women's quarters and informed Tulasi about the imminent war. Hearing this, her palate, lips and throat became dry. With a sorrowful heart, she said to him, "O my lord, my friend, my master! Stay for a moment and sit within my heart. Fill me with life for a moment. Please satisfy my human desire. Let me gaze at you fully so that my eyes may be satisfied. My breathing is very agitated now. For at the end of night I had a very bad dream. Therefore, I feel a burning within myself."

The king finished his meal and, in truthful and beneficial words, said to Tulasi, "O my queen, when it is time to reap the results of one's past acts, one experiences good and evil, pleasure and pain, fear and sorrow. In time, trees grow, branches develop, flowers blossom and fruits appear. In time, the fruitful tree decays. Similarly, in time, human beings grow and decline. In time, the creator creates, the preserver preserves and the destroyer destroys. This is the law of creation, preservation and destruction. Therefore, you should always adore Lord Krsna, as He is the Lord of Brahma, Visnu and Siva; He is the creator, maintainer and destroyer, He has no beginning nor end, and He does not depend on material nature. Lord Krsna, by His own will, has manifested nature with its animate and inanimate objects.

"All things, from Lord Brahma down to a blade of grass, are artificial and temporary. In time, they grow and decay. Thus it would be better for you to adore Radha's consort, Lord Krsna, who is distinct from the three modes of material nature, who is the Supersoul within all and the Lord of all. Take shelter of Krsna, for it is by His command that the wind blows swiftly, the sun radiates heat, Indra pours rain, death visits human beings, fire burns, and the moon travels through the sky. Seek the Supreme Krsna, who is the death of death, the time of time, the creator of the creator, the preserver of the preserver and the destroyer of the destroyer. Take refuge in Him. My dearest, no one is a friend of anyone, but Lord Hari (Krsna) is the friend of all. Therefore, pray to Him and serve Him.

"My love, who am I and who are you? By our karma, Providence has united us. Providence will also separate us. When danger comes, only fools are disturbed. The wise are never thus shaken. Like wheels, pleasure and pain always revolve. In Badarikasrama you absorbed yourself in austerities to obtain Lord Narayana as your husband. Surely you will get Him. I myself practiced austerities to obtain you as my

wife. And by Lord Brahma's grace I have gotten you. Very soon you will get Govinda in Goloka Vrndavana. And when I leave my demoniac body, I too shall go there. In that realm we will regularly see one another. By Radha's curse I was born in the precious land of India. But I will return to Goloka. Therefore, my dear, do not worry about me. You too will quit your human form and assume a spiritual form and go to Lord Hari. So you need not sorrow."

Tulasi was thus consoled.

Sankhacuda spent the night with Tulasi in the temple of gems, which was lit by diamond lamps. They rested on a nicely decorated bed that was strewn with flowers and anointed with sandal paste. Then Tulasi, who had not eaten any food and thus looked thin, became overwhelmed with grief and began weeping. The king, who knew the truth about life, clasped her to his chest and again appeased her in various ways. The spiritual instructions he had received in Bhandira Forest from Lord Krsna, which were capable of destroying all sorrows and delusions, he now carefully conveyed to Tulasi. Upon receiving them, her joy knew no bounds, for she realized that everything in this world is temporary. She and her husband then spent the remainder of the night in loving exchanges.



## SANKHACHUDA PREPARES FOR WAR

At Brahma Muhurta (before sunrise), Sankhacuda got up from his flower-strewn bed. He discarded his night clothes, bathed in pure water, put on freshly washed clothing, and smeared his body and forehead with bright tilaka markings. He performed his necessary rites and worshiped his personal Deity.

He then saw such auspicious things as curd, ghee, honey, parched rice, etc., and, as usual, distributed to the brahmanas the best jewels, pearls, clothing and gold. To make his departure for war favorable, he gave to his guru some pearls, gems and diamonds, and he gave to the poor some horses, elephants and cows. He then gave to the brahmanas a thousand storehouses, three lakhs (300,000) of towns and seven lakhs (700,000) of villages. He installed his son Suchandra as the acting king and entrusted to him the care of his family, kingdom, treasury, subjects, wealth, storehouses and conveyances.

Sankhacuda dressed himself for war and armed himself with bow and arrows. The king ordered the armies to gather, so three hundred thousand horses, one hundred thousand elephants, ten thousand chariots, three crores of archers (30 million), three crores of armed soldiers and three crores of trident holders readied themselves for battle. After counting his forces, the king appointed a maharatha, an expert in the science of warfare, as commander-in-chief over three lakh aksauhini forces (300,000). [An aksauhini is a whole army consisting of 109,000 foot soldiers, 65,610 horses, 21,870 chariots and 21,870 elephants]. Ordering three aksauhinis to beat war drums, he remembered Lord Hari and emerged from the pavilion. Sankhacuda rode on a fine chariot and, headed by his guru and his elders, left for Lord Siva's place.

Lord Siva at that time was staying on the banks of the Puspabhadra River at Siddhasrama. This holy place was known to enable sadhus to easily attain perfection in yoga. It was here that Lord Kapila practiced asceticism, and thus devotees of Lord Kapila went there and did the same. The place was bounded on the west by the western sea, on the east by the Malaya mountain range, on the south by the Sri Saila mountain and on the north by the Gandha-madhan mountain. The Puspabhadra River was forty miles wide and four thousand miles long. This auspicious river offered great spiritual merit, and was always full of transparent, sparkling water. She is the favorite spouse of the Lavana (salt) ocean and is indeed very sacred. This river issues from the Saraswati in the Himalayas and, keeping the Gomati River on her left side, she eventually merges with the western ocean.

## CHAPTER TEN

### LORD SIVA'S COUNSEL

When the demon arrived there, he saw Lord Siva sitting in a yogic meditation posture at the root of a fig tree. Looking as bright as a million suns, Lord Siva was smiling. He appeared as though the Infinite Light were radiating from every pore of his body. He was wearing a tiger skin and holding a trident and ax, and his head was covered with bright bunches of matted hair. He had five faces and three eyes in each, and there were sacred snakes coiled around his neck. He was the death of death, the destroyer of the world and a powerful lord. His face was serene and beautiful. He immortalizes his devotees, awards the fruits of asceticism and is a source of prosperity. He destroys the world and rescues sinners from hell. Upon seeing Lord Siva, Sankhacuda got down from his chariot and, with his entire army, bowed low to him. He also saluted Bhadrakali, who was on Lord Siva's left side, and Kartikkeya, who was in the front. In response, they bestowed blessings on him. Nandi and other devotees of Lord Siva got up and greeted him in a suitable manner. Sankhacuda spoke cordially to them and then sat down beside Lord Siva, who greeted him cheerfully and said, "O King, Lord Brahma, the creator of the world and the father of religious duty, had a Vaisnava son named Marici, who begat the virtuous Kasyapa. Daksa, another son of Lord Brahma, bowed to Kasyapa and gave him his thirteen daughters in marriage. Of these daughters, Danu, who was very blessed and chaste, gave birth to forty sons. They were all very spirited and known as Danavas. Amongst them, Vipracitti was prominent--he was most valorous, pious and devoted to Lord Visnu. His son's name was Dambha and he obtained Sukracarya as his guru. Following his teacher's advice, he worshiped Lord Krsna at Puskara by reciting the Krsna mantra for one hundred thousand years. Consequently, by Lord Krsna's boon, he was able to get a son like yourself.

"In your former birth, in Goloka, you were very religious and were the chief cowherd friend of Lord Krsna. By Radha's curse you have become lord of the demons here. But you are also a Vaisnava. And a Vaisnava regards everything--from the form of Lord Brahma down to the form of a blade of grass--as very illusory. Even if the four kinds of liberation are offered to him, namely, Salokya, Sarsti, Sayujya and Samipya (to live on the same planet as Lord Visnu, to have the same opulences as Lord Visnu, to merge with Lord Visnu and to have equal association with Lord Visnu, respectively), he does not care at all for them; for he is only interested in serving Lord Visnu. Nor does he care to have the position of Indra, Kuvera or Brahma, for he thinks them all insignificant. He only cares to worship and serve Lord Krsna. Now you are a true Krsna devotee. Therefore, why do you care for those things that belong

to the demigods and which are false to you? Better return to the demigods their kingdoms and please me by this act. Let the demigods be reinstated in their own positions and you govern your own kingdom happily. You are all descendants of Kasyapa Muni. So it is not desirable for relatives to feud. In fact, the sin committed by killing a brahmana is not even one sixteenth as great as that of creating hostilities amongst one's relatives.

"O King, pause. If you think that by restoring to the demigods their kingdoms, you will lose prestige, you should also consider that no one's position is stable or unchanging. When the world is completely dissolved, even Lord Brahma disappears; then, by the will of God, he subsequently reappears. And later, by virtue of his knowledge, he again creates everything. But the type of knowledge, intellect and memory that people receive depends on the amount of austerity they practiced in their previous births.

"Also, consider this: truth is the support of dharma or virtue. In the Satya-yuga (golden or truthful age), virtue is complete; in the Treta-yuga (silver age), it is reduced by one fourth; in the Dvapara yuga (copper age) by one half; and in the Kali yuga (iron age or age of quarrel), by three fourths; and at the end of the Kali yuga, virtue becomes reduced even more, like the moon on the dark-moon night.

"Or consider the sun: in the summer its light is very intense; but not so in the winter. At noon, the sun is very hot; but not so in the morning and evening. In time, the sun rises; in time, it becomes powerful; and in time, it sets. By the working of time, it is obscured by clouds.

"Then consider the moon: when the moon is devoured by Rahu (as in a lunar eclipse) it trembles; when it is released, it becomes bright again. In the full-moon night it becomes full, but does not remain so. In the bright fortnight it waxes daily, but in the dark fortnight it wanes daily. In the bright fortnight, the moon looks healthy and rich but in the dark fortnight it looks decreasingly thinner, as if afflicted by consumption. Thus at one time the moon looks powerful and at another time it looks weak and pale.

"Similarly, Bali Maharaja is presently living in Patala loka (one of the planets beneath the earth) but at another time he will become lord of the demigods. At one time the earth is lush with grains and is the resting place of all beings, but at another time it becomes covered with water. The entire world, including everything moving and nonmoving, appears at one time and disappears at another.

"Only Lord Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, remains the same. It is by His grace that I obtained the name Mrtyunjaya (the Conquerer of Death). I have witnessed many dissolutions of the world and I shall continue to witness them. Lord Krsna is both material nature and the Supreme Being. He is the individual soul as well as the Supreme Soul. Though He assumes many forms, He is beyond those forms. Whoever repeats His name and sings His glories can conquer death; he does not come under the influence of birth, death, disease, old age and fear. Lord Krsna has created Brahma, the creator; Visnu, the preserver; and me, the destroyer. By His will we possess those potencies and influences. O King! I have delegated Kala, Agni and Rudra to do the work of destruction, whereas I myself only repeat His name and sing His glories incessantly, day and night. For this reason I am called Mrtyunjaya, and by my knowledge, I have conquered death. I am fearless. When death sees me, he flies away just as snakes flee when they see Garuda."

King Sankhacuda thanked and praised Lord Siva repeatedly, and replied modestly. "What you have said is quite true. But please allow me to say a few words. Kindly listen...You have just said that fighting with one's relatives is a great sin. Then why did the Lord, on behalf of the demigods, take away all of Bali Maharaja's possessions and send him down to Patala? And why did the Lord, for the same reason, kill Hiranyaksa, Hiranyakasipu, Sumbha and other Danavas (demons)? Long ago the demons and the demigods worked hard together churning the ocean to obtain nectar from it; but why did the Lord give the nectar to the demigods? O lord, this universe is the sporting ground of Lord Krsna; and anyone He favors with fortune and glory obtains them. The quarreling between the demigods and the demons is eternal. Victory and defeat come to each party alternately. So it is improper and unnecessary for you to interfere in our quarrel. For you, O great lord, are both my relative and my friend. And your nature is of the Highest Self. To you, the demigods and the demons are equal. So it is certainly shameful for you to become our opponent and favor the demigods. If you win this battle, the glory and fame you would gain would not be as great as if we win. And if we defeat you, the disgrace and infamy you would earn would be much greater than that which we would if we were defeated: for we are small and you are great.

Lord Siva smiled and gently said, "O King, you have descended from a Brahman family, so if I am defeated by you, how shall I incur shame? In former days the Lord fought with Madhu and Kaitabha as well as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksa. And I fought with Tripura. And the universal mother, Durga Devi, fought with Sumbha and other demons. But none of the demons just mentioned, who were killed in the war, can be compared to you in prowess. You are the best of Lord Krsna's attendants. The

demigods have sought Lord Hari's protection, so He has sent me on their behalf to approach you. If I am defeated by a sublime person like yourself, how can I be disgraced? But I'm surprised to hear you talk of disgrace and infamy. There is no point in continuing this useless talk. Now, either return to the demigods their kingdoms or prepare to fight with me. I am firm in my determination."

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE WAR BEGINS

Sankhacuda quickly got up, bowed down to Lord Siva, and ascended his chariot with his ministers. Lord Siva ordered his army to be ready immediately, and Sankhacuda did the same. Musical instruments blared out, formally announcing the start of war. There was a great clamor along with the cries of the warriors. Then the fight between the demigods and demons began, and both sides fought righteously. Indra fought with Vrsaparvan, Bhaskara (the sun god) with Vipracitti, Nisakara (the moon god) with Dambha, Fire with Gokarna, Kuvera with Kalakeya, and Viswakarma with Maya. Mrtyu (the death god) battled with Bhayamkara, Yama with Sambara, Vayu with Bala, Vaurua with Vikamka, Budha with Dhritapristha, Sani with Raktaksa, Jayanta with Ratnasara, the Vasus with the groups of Varchases, the two Aswini Kumaras with the two Diptimans, Nalukuvra with Dhuma, and Dharma with Dhurandhara. Mangala contended with Ganakaksa, Vaisvana with Sobhakara, Mammatha with Pipita, the twelve sun gods with Gokamukha, Curna, Kahdga, Dhumra, Samhala, Visva and Palasa. The eleven Rudras fought with eleven terrible and powerful asuras, Mahamani fought with Ugracanda and others, and Nandisvara and the rest fought with the leading demons.

Lord Siva, the goddess Kali and their son Karttikeya encamped at the root of the holy fig tree.

King Sankhacuda, adorned with gems and surrounded by millions of demons, sat down on a beautiful jeweled throne.

Then a great battle ensued. Many mystical and supernatural weapons were hurled, and numerous demigods and demons were killed. Maces, long and short swords, Pattisas, Bhusundis, Mudgaras (different types of iron clubs), javelins, spears, axes and other weapons glowed in the soldiers' hands. Fighting with these weapons, the jubilant warriors roared and cut off each other's heads. Elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers, along with their drivers and passengers were hit and torn apart. Arms, thighs, hands, hips, ears and feet were cut off. Flags, arrows, swords, coats of mail and beautiful ornaments were split apart. From the tussle, glowing heads with earrings as well as elephantlike thighs were strewn about the earth. Severed arms with their ornaments and weapons were scattered about like honeycombs. Warriors running on the battlefield saw several headless bodies that jumped and which were still holding their weapons. The warriors discharged so many arrows at each other that the sun became obscured and it appeared as if the rainy season had arrived. Heroes roared like lions, blew conches loudly and fought furiously. Though the combat was terrible and tumultuous, it was pleasurable to the fighters. Then the demigods were defeated. Many were wounded by weapons and missiles, and, frightened, they fled the battlefield.



## KARTTIKEYA AND KALI ENTER THE BATTLE

The demigods returned to Lord Siva and sought refuge in him. Disturbed, they cried out, "O Lord, please save us! Save us!"

Lord Siva, noting the demigods' defeat and hearing their fearful cries, became greatly enraged. Glancing at the demigods sympathetically, he assured them of his protection. He ordered his son, the great hero Karttikeya, to attack the enemy. Fighting courageously with the hosts of demons, Karttikeya shouted angrily and roared heroically, killing one hundred aksauhinis in the battle. Then Kali, her eyes like a red lotus, chopped off their heads, drank their blood and rapidly ate their flesh. She fought in many ways, frightening both the demigods and the demons. Wherever she went, she drank the Danavas' blood. With one hand she grabbed ten million elephants and ten million men and playfully shoved them into her mouth. Thousands of headless bodies appeared to be dancing on the battlefield. All the cowards were terrified by the overwhelming tumult.

Karttikeya again became furious. Showering countless volleys of arrows, he struck thousands of demon leaders within a few seconds. Terrified, many of the Danavas fled, but those who stayed were slain. The demons Vrsaparvan, Vipracitti, Danda and Vikampana fought with Karttikeya by turns, and all of them were wounded by his spear. Kali assisted Karttikeya, and together they won the battle. In the heavens, the celestials pounded their drums and showered down flowers. Sankhacuda saw the appalling spectacle wrought by Karttikeya and Kali; it appeared as terrible as the final dissolution of the world. Furious, he prepared for battle. Accompanied by many heroes, he climbed into his diamond-studded airplane, which was equipped with weapons and missiles. This enlivened and encouraged his men, especially when Sankhacuda, sitting in the middle of the plane, drew his bowstring to his ear and discharged volleys of arrows. The shafts were terrifying and could not be endured. They resembled a shower of rain and covered the battlefield with intense darkness, relieved only by occasional flashes of fire.

At this, Nandisvara and the other demigods fled, however, Karttikeya stayed. Then the Danava king showered mountains, serpents, pythons and trees so horrendously that they could not be resisted. Thus Karttikeya looked like the sun covered by thick sheets of frost. Sankhacuda broke Karttikeya's car, cut to pieces his bow, chariot and horses, and shattered his peacock carrier. Then he hurled his effulgent spear at Karttikeya's chest, and the force of the blow caused him to fall unconscious.

Quickly regaining consciousness, Karttikeya mounted his sturdy, bejeweled chariot, took up his weapons and missiles and fought awesomely. Using his mystic weapons, he furiously split the weapons that had been hurled at him, namely, the serpents, mountains, trees and rocks. Then he put out a fire with his water weapon, split apart the demon's bow and chariot, and killed his charioteer. Roaring and shouting repeatedly like a hero, he split Sankhacuda's armor and crown, and then hurled his blazing spear at the demon's chest. Sankhacuda collapsed unconscious.

But within a second that powerful asura regained consciousness and, with the strength of a lion, got up and roared. The demon grabbed another bow and more arrows and mounted another chariot. Foremost in the use of mystic powers, the demon caused a tremendous downpour of arrows on Karttikeya that completely enshrouded him. Then the demon grabbed an invincible iron spear, which was filled with Lord Visnu's energy; it was radiant like a hundred suns and looked like the vast fire that occurs at the end

of the world. Sankhacuda hurled it at Karttikeya and it hit him with the impact of a massive fireball, causing him to drop unconscious.

Kali immediately went to him, lifted her son to her breast and carried him to Lord Siva. By virtue of his deep knowledge, Lord Siva revived Karttikeya and endowed him with inexhaustible strength. He then got up full of vigor but remained guarded by Lord Siva.

Kali, followed by Nandiswara, the Gandharvas, the Yaksas, the Raksasas and the Kinnaras, returned to the battlefield. Hundreds of war drums were pounded and hundreds of persons carried wine. When Kali began to roar like a lioness, the demons fainted. Seeing this, she burst into cackles of laughter repeatedly, boding ill to the asuras. Then Kali drank wine and danced on the battlefield, and the Yoginis, Dakinis and the demigods also drank, roaring and reveling.

When Sankhacuda saw Kali, he hastened to the field. Though his men were frightened by her, he assured them of his protection.

Kali then hurled a fire weapon and it shot over the field like the fire that manifests when the world is about to come to an end. of final devastation; but the king shot a water weapon at it and quickly extinguished it. Kali hurled the Varuna weapon at him but he baffled it with the Gandharva weapon. Kali threw the Maheswara weapon, but he destroyed it with his Vaisnava weapon. Then, after uttering some mantras, Kali discharged the Narayana weapon. Seeing it coming at him, the king jumped off his chariot and bowed down to it, causing the weapon to zoom upwards like the fire of final dissolution. The demon, full of devotion, fell prostrate on the ground. The goddess recited a mantra and hurled a Brahmastra at him, but he baffled it with his own Brahmastra. Then she threw a weapon at him that was eight miles long, but Sankhacuda cut it to pieces with his celestial weapon.

Infuriated, the demon discharged celestial missiles at the goddess but she merely opened her mouth wide, swallowed them and roared with loud laughter. This terrified the demons. Sankhacuda then hurled a weapon at her that was eight hundred miles long, but she shattered it into a hundred pieces with celestial missiles. He flung the Vaisnava missile at the goddess but she blocked it with a Mahesvara missile.

The fight continued for a long time and all the demigods and demons stood watching it.

Kali was now infuriated. Just as she readied herself to throw the Pasupata weapon, a heavenly voice from the sky cried out, "O Goddess! Do not throw this missile at Sankhacuda. So long as Lord Hari's amulet remains on his neck and his wife's chastity is not violated, the king cannot be killed--even by the never-failing Pasupata weapon. Lord Brahma gave him this boon." Kali heeded the voice and desisted from hurling the weapon. But out of hunger she devoured millions of demons. She then hastened to devour Sankhacuda but he resisted her with his sharp celestial weapons. She next aimed a scimitar at him that flashed like the noonday sun but the king cut it to pieces. So she ran after him to swallow him. But the skillful demon prevented her by expanding his body.

Highly enraged, the dreadful goddess smashed his chariot, killed his charioteer, and hurled a terrible spear at him--one that looked like the awesome fire that occurs when the world is about to end. But the king caught it with his left hand. The goddess then angrily struck him with her fists and caused the demon enough pain to make him reel and fall unconscious for a moment. Regaining consciousness, he got up, but he would not engage in hand-to-hand combat with Kali. Rather, he bowed down to her.

The goddess then threw other weapons at Sankhacuda, but he partly cut them down and partly took them up and absorbed them, rendering them futile. Regarding her as his mother, he did not aim any weapons at her. Then Kali caught hold of him, whirled him around repeatedly and angrily flung him into the sky. The demon came down with a tremendous crash, but he immediately got up and bowed to the goddess. Next, he gladly climbed up onto another stunning jeweled chariot and, feeling no fatigue at all from the battle, continued fighting.

Then Kali, feeling hungry, began drinking the blood and eating the fat and flesh of the demons. After this the goddess returned to Lord Siva and described to him in detail the progression of the war--from beginning to end. Hearing about the demise of the demons, Lord Siva laughed. Kali remarked that the only demons alive were the ones who crawled out of her mouth while she was chewing them, which amounted to about one hundred thousand. "And when I took hold of the Pasupata weapon to kill Sankhacuda, an invisible celestial voice cried, " He cannot be killed by you." Then the powerful demon stopped hurling weapons at me. All he did was shatter those which I hurled at him."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### LORD SIVA ENTERS THE BATTLE

After hearing the goddess' report, Lord Siva, versed in the highest knowledge, went with his entire retinue into battle. He sat on his great bull and was encircled by Virabhadra and others, as well as the Bhairavas and the Ksetrapalas, all equal to him in valor. As Lord Siva entered the battle ground, he assumed a heroic form and shone well as the incarnation form of the destroyer.

When Sankhacuda saw him, he alighted from his aerial chariot and offered obeisances to him by lying flat on the ground. Then he got up, quickly returned to his chariot, and, seizing his bow and arrows, readied himself for the fight.

The fight lasted for a year. The two heroes showered arrows fiercely on one another the way clouds continuously pelt the earth with rain. When Sankhacuda playfully shot dreadful arrows, Lord Siva split them all with his own arrows. Lord Siva hit the demon's limbs with various weapons. Sankhacuda then grabbed his sword and shield, hastened toward Lord Siva's sacred bull and hit it on the head. Seeing this, Lord Siva smashed that sword and the shining shield by his Ksurapra weapon. Then the demon threw his spear but Lord Siva shot an arrow at it and split it in half. Sankhacuda, now infuriated, flung a discus, but Siva punched it with his fist and splattered it. The demon threw his club vigorously at Lord Siva, however Siva split it apart and reduced it to ashes. Grabbing an ax, Sankhacuda rushed toward Lord Siva, but Siva released such a volley of arrows at him that he fell unconscious.

The Danava quickly regained consciousness and mounted his beautiful chariot. Covering the whole sky, he shone resplendently with his mystic weapons and arrows.

When Lord Siva saw him coming toward him, he pounded his drum with enthusiasm and twanged his bowstring with a loud sound. Siva filled all four quarters with the sound of his horn and then, roaring loudly, frightened the demons. Next, the noble bull bellowed thunderously, filling the sky, earth and eight quarters and shaming the proud trumpeting elephants. Lord Siva surpassed all previous sounds by clapping the earth and the sky. The warriors emitted a raucous laughing sound, portending ill for the asuras. Siva also roared in that mighty battle.

The demons were frightened by these piercing and dreadful sounds. However, the Danava king became extremely angry.

Lord Siva shouted, "O wicked one, stay! Stay!," and the gods and his companions quickly shouted, "Victory! Victory!"

Sankhacuda then hurled at Lord Siva his awesome flame-shooting spear; as it traveled, it blazed brilliantly like a mighty fire. However, one of Lord Siva's followers shot a meteor at it and stopped it. As the battle between Lord Siva and the demon king continued, the heavens, earth, mountains, oceans and rivers shook and trembled. Lord Siva split apart hundreds and thousands of Sankhacuda's arrows, and the king did the same to Lord Siva's shafts. Then the infuriated Siva hit Sankhacuda with his trident and knocked him unconscious. But quickly regaining consciousness, he grabbed his bow, discharged some arrows and hit Lord Siva and his assistants. Then, by means of magic, the asura assumed ten thousand arms and quickly surrounded Lord Siva with ten thousand discuses. But Lord Siva shot wonderful arrows at them and split them all apart. Sankhacuda next seized his mace and, accompanied by a massive army, charged Lord Siva with the intention of destroying him. However, Lord Siva split the mace, making the Danava furious. The demon then seized a spear that, to the enemy, blazed unbearably; as he neared Lord Siva, the latter hit him in the chest with his trident. Then, a huge, valorous being came out of the demon's chest and said, "Stand by, stand by." Lord Siva laughed loudly and, with his sword, cut off the fearsome head that was emerging, and it fell to the ground.

Spreading her mouth wide open, Kali angrily consumed countless demons, crushing their heads with her fierce fangs. The enraged Ksetrapala consumed many other demons, and Lord Siva shot missiles at some



and killed them. Others were just wounded. Virabhadra and Nandisvara destroyed many other demons. Thus a major portion of Sankhacuda's army was killed while many of his terrified troops cowardly fled the battlefield. But Sankhacuda stood firm and said to Lord Siva, "I'm here, ready to fight with you. Come on. So what if many of my men have been killed. Fight me, face to face!"

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### LORD VISNU APPEARS

Sankhacuda threw mystic missiles at Lord Siva. He also, like a cloud pouring rain, showered arrows on him. He used different kinds of illusory methods that were invisible and bewildering to the demigods and Lord Siva's followers. Seeing this, Lord Siva released his supernatural Mahesvara missiles and these quickly destroyed the illusions, divesting them of their brilliance. Then the powerful Lord Siva suddenly grabbed his trident--a trident that could not be withstood even by great persons--so as to slay Sankhacuda. But to stop him, an unembodied heavenly voice boomed, "O Siva, do not throw the trident now. Listen to this request...There is no doubt that you are able to destroy the universe in a second. So what would be the difficulty in destroying this one Danava, Sankhacuda? Still you should not ignore the rules of the Vedas. O great one, rather make it truthful and fruitful. Understand that Lord Brahma has stated that as long as Sankhacuda wears the armor of Lord Visnu --namely, the amulet around his neck--and as long as his wife maintains her marital faithfulness, he can neither die nor grow old. He is under these boons. Therefore, please make these boons truthful by not violating them."

Lord Siva replied, "So be it."

At that moment Lord Siva desired to see Lord Visnu, and so Lord Visnu appeared there. Lord Siva told Him what he desired and Lord Visnu agreed to help him.

So, dressed as an aged brahmana, Lord Visnu, foremost in mystic power, approached Sankhacuda and requested, "O King of the Danavas, please grant my request. You give away in charity all kinds of wealth and riches, so please grant me what I desire. I am a quiet, peaceful, aged brahmana. I am very hungry and thirsty. But first make your promise, and then I will tell you what I want."

The king, with a kind face and a pleasing eye, swore to Him that he would give Him whatever He asked for. So the brahmana said affectionately, "I would like your amulet."

Sankhacuda, a well-wisher of the brahmanas who spoke the truth, thus handed over to the disguised Lord Visnu his divine amulet.

Then Lord Visnu assumed the form of Sankhacuda and went to Tulasi Devi's palace. When He approached the entrance, He created the appearance of a victory homecoming, causing others to beat their drums and to shout "Victory".

Tulasi Devi was awakened from sleep. On hearing the sounds, the chaste woman was ecstatic. She eagerly peeped through the windows onto the road. When she realized that her husband had returned, she observed all auspicious rites and offered cash gifts to the brahmanas. Then she beautified herself.

Lord Visnu went to Tulasi's apartment.

When she saw the Lord and thought He was her husband, she was gladdened. She bathed His feet, offered obeisances to Him, and sobbed. Then she had Him sit on the jeweled throne and handed Him the auspicious betal leaf that had been made fragrant with camphor. She said, "Today my life has become happy. For my beloved, who went to fight, has now returned home."

Drinking him in with wide eyes and a smiling face, Tulasi Devi sweetly asked him about the events of the battle. "My lord, how did you do in the battle with Lord Siva? He is the protector of the demigods and the annihilator of countless universes. You have returned cheerfully after defeating the great lord. How did you beat him? Tell me all about it."

Lord Visnu laughed and said sweetly, "When I reached the battlefield, there was a terrible clamor. A big battle then followed. The demigods fought the demons, and each side was eager for victory. The demigods defeated the demons. But then I fought the powerful demigods. Those whom I defeated sought shelter of Lord Siva. Then Lord Siva, to help them, fought me for a long time. My dear wife, Lord Siva and I fought continuously for a year. All the demons were killed. Then Lord Brahma made us agree to peace. Thus, at Lord Brahma's order, the powers of authority were re-assigned to the demigods...So, I have come home and Lord Siva has gone to Sivaloka. All have returned to health and normalcy. Thus the trouble has ended."

Lord Visnu then lay down on the bed with Tulasi devi and became close with her.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE FINAL BATTLE

At this time, on the battlefield, King Sankhacuda approached Lord Siva without his armor. The latter seized his blazing trident to slay the demon. The trident's name was Vijaya, and it was as bright as a hundred summer suns. The front of it was presided over by Lord Narayana, the middle by Lord Brahma, the root by Lord Siva and the edge by Time. It was bright like the fire of devastation at the end of the world--dauntless, irresistible, fixed and destructive in its aim. In brilliance it equaled the Sudarsana Chakra, and it was the topmost of all weapons. No one but Lord Visnu or Lord Siva could wield it, and all but them were afraid of it. The trident was 14,000 cubits long and 100 cubits wide. One could not tell from where and how it proceeded. By its own will, this trident could destroy all the worlds.

Lord Siva raised the trident high, aimed and hurled it at Sankhacuda. Seeing it coming, the demon king dropped his bow and arrows, collected his mind, sat down in a yoga posture, and meditated on the lotus feet of Lord Krsna with great devotion. The trident whirled around Sankhacuda's head for a while. Then, at Lord Siva's command, it smashed into the demon's head and burned him and his chariot to ashes. Thereafter, the trident returned to Lord Siva, and then left for the airways at the speed of the mind, and finally returned with force and gladness to Lord Narayana.

In the heavens, the celestials beat their drums, the Gandharvas and Kinnaras sang, the sages and demigods chanted eulogies and all the damsels danced. Flowers continuously rained down upon Lord Siva, and Lord Visnu, Brahma, Indra and other notables praised him.

Out of compassion, Lord Siva tossed the demon's bones into the sea and these bones became transformed into all the conches in the world. They are always considered very holy and favorable in the worship of the demigods. The water in the conch is also considered very sacred and satisfying to the demigods--as sacred as the water in any holy river. It can be offered to all the demigods but not to Lord Siva. Wherever the conch is blown, Laksmi dwells there with great delight. If one bathes with the conch water, this is equivalent to bathing in all the holy rivers. Wherever the conch is placed, Lord Hari and Goddess Laksmi live there, and all inauspicious things disappear from that place. However, wherever the females and sudras blow the conch, Goddess Laksmi becomes annoyed and, out of fear, travels to other places.

Lord Siva then mounted his bull carrier and, with all his followers, returned to his own residence. All the demigods also returned to their abodes with great joy. Before leaving, Lord Siva favored Sankhacuda by releasing him from his curse, and thus he regained his original form as the cowherd boy Sudama.

Adorned with jewels, holding a flute, mounted on a divine chariot, and surrounded by numerous cowherd boys from Goloka Vrndavana, Sankhacuda then flew to the spiritual sky, Goloka, which is full of devotees of Lord Krsna who have various transcendental relationships with Him.

When Sudama saw Srimati Radharani and Sri Krsna, he bowed down to Their lotus feet with devotion. Seeing him, the Divine couple were filled with love for him and, with kind faces and joyful eyes, lifted him up and took him on Their laps.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### TULASI CURSES LORD VISNU

Meanwhile, at the palace, Tulasi Devi was still lying on the bed with Lord Visnu, who was still disguised as Sankhacuda. She suddenly realized that there was a distinct difference in the way her husband had expressed his affection to her in the past from the way he had just expressed it. This made her suspicious, and she began to wonder whether the man with whom she had just been intimate was really her husband. Then, not feeling the same happiness, affection and attraction, she looked at him

distrustfully and said, "You're--you're not--" Realizing in the core of her heart that He was not her husband, she asked, "Who--who are you?"

Tulasi Devi became angry. "Yes, who are you? I want to know immediately. For I know you have deceived me to enjoy me! You have outraged my modesty! For this I shall curse you!"

Lord Visnu then assumed His own true beautiful form. Tulasi saw the Lord of the demigods before her. His complexion was deep blue, like fresh rain clouds, His eyes were like autumnal lotuses, and He was decked with jewels and ornaments. His smiling face looked very gracious, and He wore a yellow robe. Seeing Vasudeva's handsome form, Tulasi fainted.

A few moments later she regained consciousness and said, "O Lord, you are like a stone! You are merciless! You violated my chastity by deception. And by this means you have killed my husband. O Lord, you are merciless! Yes, Your heart is like a stone. Therefore, I curse you to become a stone. Those who call you holy are doubtlessly wrong. Your devotee committed no offense and yet, for the sake of others, You killed him! Why?"

Overpowered with grief and sadness, Tulasi cried loudly and repeatedly lamented.

Seeing her so upset, Narayana, who is an ocean of mercy, tried to console her according to dharmic rules. He said, "O exalted one, you performed austerities for a long time to get Me as your husband. And Sankhacuda also performed austerities for a long time to get you as his wife. By that austerity, he fulfilled his wish. It was then necessary for Me to fulfill your wish. For this reason, I did what I did. Now leave your earthly body and assume a spiritual body--and be married to Me. Be like Laksmi. Your body will become a famous river known as Gandiki, a virtuous, pure and transparent river in this holy land of India. Your hairs will be transformed into holy trees; and since the trees will be born of you, they will be known as Tulasi trees. All the residents of the three worlds will perform worship with the leaves and flowers of this tree. Thus, you, Tulasi, will reign as the best among trees and flowers."

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### BLESSINGS TULASI DEVI WILL BESTOW

Lord Narayana continued...

"The sanctifying Tulasi tree will grow in Goloka, on the coast of the Viraja River, on the rasa-dance site, in the forests of Vrndavana, Bhandira, Champaka, Chandana, and in the groves of Madhavi, Ketaki, Kunda, Mallika and Malati. You will live in sacred places and bestow the highest religious merit. All the holy spots will converge and reside at the root of the Tulasi tree, and thus spiritual merits will accrue to all. O fair one, all the demigods and I will wait there to gather the falling Tulasi leaves.

"Whoever will be moistened or anointed with the water that has been sanctified by Tulasi leaves, will reap the benefits of having bathed in all the sacred rivers and performed all kinds of sacrifices.

"Lord Hari will not be as pleased with the gift of a thousand jars of honey as with one Tulasi leaf.

"Offering one such leaf as a gift will bring the same reward obtained by offering millions of cows.

"If one offers Tulasi leaves during the month of Kartika, he gets the same rewards as those just mentioned.

"If, at the time of death, one drinks or gets the Tulasi-leaf water, one will be freed of all his sins and proceed to Vaikuntha.

"Whoever drinks the Tulasi-leaf water daily will be redeemed in his lifetime and receive the benefit of a dip in the Ganges.

"Whoever plucks a Tulasi leaf, keeps it on his person, and then leaves his body in a holy place, will go to Visnuloka.

"Anyone who worships Me with this leaf daily will reap the blessings of a hundred thousand horse sacrifices.

"Anyone who leaves his body holding a Tulasi leaf in his hands will be saved from all sins.

"Anyone who wears a necklace composed of Tulasi wood, will surely, at every step, get the reward of a horse sacrifice.

"Whoever breaks his promise while holding the Tulasi leaf will go to the Kalsutra hell for as long as the sun and moon last.

"Anyone who gives false evidence in the presence of the Tulasi leaf, will go to the Kumbhipaka hell for as long as the lifespans of fourteen Indras.

"Whoever at the time of death drinks or gets a little Tulasi-leaf water will certainly proceed to Vaikuntha, leaving in a jeweled airplane.

"Lord Hari will decapitate that person who, on the day of the new moon or the full moon, or on the twelfth or last day of the lunar month, or after being anointed with oil just before taking a bath, or at noon, night, daybreak or sundown, or in a state of impurity or in one's night dress--will cull or pluck the Tulasi leaf.

"O chaste one, even if such a leaf is kept for three nights and becomes dry, it can still be employed in connection with funeral ceremonies, vows, gifts, consecration of temples and the worship of demigods.

"If Tulasi leaves that were offered to Lord Visnu have fallen on the ground or on water are then properly washed, they may still be used for other sacred purposes.

"You will always be the presiding deity of the Tulasi plant here on Earth, and at the same time you will always sport with Sri Krsna in solitude in Goloka. You will also be the presiding deity of the Gandaki River, and thereby shower India with religious merit. You will further be the wife of the ocean of salt, which is My partial expansion. O chaste goddess, you will always remain personally by My side and enjoy My company, as Laksmi does.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### BLESSINGS OF THE SALIGRAM

Lord Hari continued...

"As for Me, by your curse, I will become a stone and remain close to the bank of the Gandaki River. Millions of Vajrakita worms, with their sharp teeth, will make convolutions or rings in the stones there, representing Me. These will be known as Saligrams or sacred stones.

"Those stones which have one entrance hole, four rings, are marked with a garland of wild flowers, and look like a fresh rain cloud, will be known as Laksmi-Narayana murtis or forms.

"Those stones that have one entrance hole, four rings, look like fresh rain clouds but have no garland mark will be called Laksmi-Janardana chakras.

"Those that have two entrance holes, four rings, are impressed with the marks of cow-hooves but have no garland mark, will be called Raghunatha chakras.

"Those that are very small, have two rings, look like fresh rain clouds but have no garland mark will be called Vamana chakras. They shall be auspicious to householders.

"Those stones that are very small, have two rings and a garland mark will be called Sridhara chakras. They will bring prosperity to householders.

"Those stones that are large, circular, have two rings but no garland mark will be known as Damodara chakras.

"Those that are medium-large, have two rings, have the marks of arrows and quivers will be known as Rana-rama chakras.

"Those that are medium-sized, have seven rings, and have the marks of an umbrella and ornaments will be called Rajarajesvaras (king of kings) chakra, and give royal prosperity to the people.

"Those that are large, have fourteen wheels, look like fresh rain clouds will be called Ananta chakras. They will bestow the fourfold fruits--artha, kama, dharma and moksa (wealth, pleasure, righteousness and liberation).

"Those that are spherical, beautiful, medium-large, have two rings, look like rain clouds, and are marked with cow hooves will be called Madhusudana chakras.

"Those that have one ring will be called Sudarsana chakras.

"Those that have their rings hidden will be called Gadadhara chakras.

"Those that have two rings and the face of a horse will be called Hayagrivas.

"Those that have two rings, their mouths very wide and extended, and look very terrifying will be called Narasimhas. They will bestow detachment on their worshipers.

"Those that have two rings, extended mouths and garland marks (elliptical) will be called Laksmi Nrsimghas. They will bestow blessings on the householders who worship them.

"Those that have, near their doors, two rings that are of equal size and beautiful, with manifested marks, will be known as Vasudevas. They will fulfill all desires.

"Those that have a thin ring, look like fresh rain clouds, and have many fine holes within their wide gaping facets will be called Pradyumnas. They will give happiness to all householders.

"Those whose rings are united and whose backs are capacious will be called Sankarsanas. They will always bestow happiness to householders.

"Those that look yellow, round and very beautiful will be known as Aniruddhas. They also will give happiness to householders.

"Wherever there are Saligrama stones, Lord Hari Himself exists. And wherever Lord Hari is, Goddess Laksmi and all the holy places also exist.



"By worshipping the Saligrama sila (stone), one destroys the sin of having killed a brahmana and any other type of sin.

"By worshipping Saligrama stones of the following shapes, the following effects take place:

"If the stone looks like an umbrella, one may obtain a kingdom.

"If the stone looks round, great prosperity.

"If it is cart-shaped, miseries.

"If its ends are spear-shaped, death.

"If its facets are distorted, poverty.

"If it is yellow, evils and afflictions.

"If its rings look broken, diseases.

"If its rings are split into fragments, certain death.

"If one observes vows, offers gifts, consecrates a temple, performs sraddha or funeral ceremonies, or worships the demigods before the Saligrama sila--all these acts become highly exalted.

"If one worships the Saligrama sila, one acquires the merits of bathing in all the tirthas (holy rivers) and being initiated into all the Vedic sacrifices.

"Furthermore, one acquires all the merits acquired by performing all the Vedic sacrifices by visiting all the holy places, by fulfilling vows, by practicing all austerities and by reading all the Vedas.

"Whoever performs his abhiseka (bathing) ceremony always with Salagrama water--being sprinkled with this water at the initiation and installation ceremonies--acquires the spiritual merits gained by offering all sorts of gifts and walking around the entire earth.

"Without a doubt, the demigods are pleased with the person who daily worships the Salagrama sila. He becomes so holy that even all the holy places desire his touch. He becomes a jivanmukta (liberated while in his physical body) and very godly. Ultimately he goes to Vaikuntha and serves Lord Hari there eternally. Any sin, such as the killing of a brahmana, flies away from him just as snakes flee at the sight of Garuda (Lord Visnu's eagle carrier). The earth is consecrated by the dust of his feet. By his birth, he redeems one hundred thousand of his ancestors.

"Anyone who, while dying, drinks the Salagrama sila water, will be freed from all his sins and go to Vaikuntha. He becomes completely freed from the effects of karma (material action and reaction) and, without a doubt, becomes forever absorbed in the vision of Lord Visnu's feet.

"Anyone who lies while holding the Saligrama in his hands goes to Kumbhipaka hell for as long as Lord Brahma is alive (311

trillion and 40 billion earth years).

"If one breaks his promise while holding the Saligram in his hand, he goes to the Asipatra hell for one hundred thousand manvantaras.

"He who worships the Saligram sila without offering Tulasi leaves on it, or who separates the leaves from the stone, will have to suffer separation from his wife in his next birth.

"And if one does not offer the Tulasi leaves in a conch, he remains without his wife for seven births and becomes diseased.

"He who maintains the Saligrama sila, the Tulasi, and the conch in one place, becomes very dear to Lord Narayana.

"It is painful for a person to separate from his beloved, whose company he once enjoyed. You were the dearest of Sankhacuda for one manvantara, so it is now very difficult for you to separate from him.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### TULASI RETURNS TO THE SPIRITUAL WORLD

When Lord Hari stopped speaking, Tulasi left her physical body, assumed a celestial form and went to Vaikuntha. There she remained in the heart of Sri Hari, as did Goddess Laksmi. Lord Hari also went with her to Vaikuntha.

As soon as Tulasi Devi quit her physical body, this body became the Gandaki River; and Lord Hari manifested Himself as the mountain on the bank of that river, giving spiritual merit to the people. The worms on that mountain cut and fashion, i.e. construct, various kinds of stones. Those that fall into the river and assume the color of clouds, without a doubt, yield results; but those that drop onto the dry land become brown by the sun's rays and unfit for worship.

Lord Hari duly honored Tulasi and began to sport with her along with Goddess Laksmi. He elevated Tulasi to the rank of Laksmi, making her blessed and glorious. Laksmi and Goddess Ganga allowed and tolerated this new union of Lord Narayana and Tulasi. However, Goddess Saraswati became angered and could not tolerate Tulasi's elevated position.

Once, in the presence of Lord Hari, the dignified Saraswati quarreled with Tulasi and hurt her. Tulasi, humiliated and insulted, disappeared. Then, out of anger, the wise and adept Tulasi became invisible even to Lord Hari.

When Lord Hari did not see Tulasi, he appeased Saraswati and, obtaining her permission, proceeded to the Tulasi forest--Vrindavana. He was very much disturbed by separation from her. There, he took a bath; then, with proper rites, he worshiped the chaste Tulasi with His whole heart, and then meditated on her with devotion, and uttered, "Obeisances to Tulasi Devi, Queen of Vrindavana Forest." During the worship, Tulasi was offered a lighted ghee lamp, frankincense, sandal flowers and sacrificial offerings. Anyone who worships Tulasi in this way will achieve complete perfection.

The Lord then began to praise His glorious devotee. "The Tulasi trees collect in many groups, thus the pandits call it Vrinda. I praise that dear Tulasi. Long ago she appeared in the Vrindavana forest and is thus known as Vrindavani. I adore that auspicious and glorious one. She is always worshiped in

countless universes and so is known as Visvapujita--one who is worshiped throughout the world. I worship that Visvapujita.

"Countless universes are made pure and holy by her contact. She is therefore called Visvapavani--one who purifies the whole universe. Remembering her, I am suffering from separation from her. Though other flowers be heaped upon the demigods, they are not satisfied unless Tulasi is offered. Thus she is considered the essence of all flowers and is called Puspasara. Now I am anguished and troubled and very eager to see her--she who is purity incarnate. I crave the favor of that goddess. Because attainment of her brings faith and joy, she is called Nandini. O may she be pleased with Me. In the whole world she is incomparable, thus she is called Tulasi. I take refuge of that dear Tulasi. Very chaste and dear, she is the life of Krsna and so is known as Krsnajivani. O may that goddess save my life."

After Lord Hari finished the ceremony and prayers, Tulasi was pleased and came out of the tree. She immediately took refuge at Lord Hari's lotus feet. He blessed her by saying, "O Tulasi, you will be worshiped by all throughout the world. Dearest, I will hold you on my head and in my heart; and all the demigods will hold you on their heads."

When Lord Hari saw that the dignified Tulasi was weeping because her feelings had been hurt by Saraswati, He clasped her to His breast, took her to Saraswati and reconciled their differences. Then He blessed Tulasi, saying, "You will be worshiped by all, honored by all and respected by all. And all will carry you on their heads. I also will worship, honor and respect you and carry you on My head."

Tulasi was now very happy. Saraswati then embraced her and seated her by her side. Laksmi and Ganga, smiling, also hugged her, and then took her home.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### WORSHIP OF TULASI DEVI

Whoever worships Tulasi Devi with her eight names and their meanings--Vrinda, Vrindavani, Viswapavani, Visvapujita, Tulasi, Puspasara, Nandini, and Krsna Jivani--and properly sings this hymn of eight verses, acquires the merit of performing an Asvamedha (horse) sacrifice.

Because Tulasi was born on the lunar day of the full moon in the month of Kartika, Lord Hari prescribed this day for her worship.

Whoever worships her on this day will be freed from all sins and go to Vaikuntha.

Whoever, out of reverence, gives Lord Visnu a Tulasi leaf in the month of Kartika, will gain the same benefit obtained by giving the gift of ten million cows.

By hearing or recalling the Tulasi hymn, a son will be born to the sonless woman, a wife will be obtained by the wifeless man, health will be restored to a diseased person, freedom will be given to a prisoner, fearlessness will be bestowed upon the terrified, and salvation will be given to the sinners.

In the Kanva Sakha branch of the Vedas, the method of worshiping and meditating on Tulasi Devi is described. Without invoking the goddess, one can reverentially meditate on her and adore her with sixteen ingredients in the following way:

"Of all flowers, Tulasi is the best. She is worshipable and beautiful, and burns up the fuel of sins like a flame of fire. Of all the goddesses, she is the most sacred. Because no one can compare to her, she is called Tulasi. I worship this goddess who is entreated by all. She is placed on the heads of all, desired

by all, and makes the universe holy. She bestows liberation from this world and devotion to Lord Hari. I worship her."

After this meditation and worship, the wise should read her praises and bow down to her.

END